

➔ **Final Paper due date change: Now due on Wednesday 12/10**

## Qualitative Methods and Mixed Methods

*“Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.”* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)

### Review—the five qualitative approaches:

- Narrative
- Phenomenological
- Grounded theory
- Ethnography
- Case study

Identify the approach implied in the following scenarios:

1. A focus group with teen mothers to understand their experiences and hardships completing high school **Phenomenological**
2. Interviews with participants in an experimental study to understand how the new treatment did or did not work, from their point of view **Grounded theory**
3. A study of one community’s response to the economic downturn, using qualitative and quantitative types of data **Case study**
4. The life events of a returning veteran that influenced how resilience influenced coping with trauma **Narrative**
5. A study of internet culture with Facebook members **Ethnography**

## Qualitative Methods Design

**\*\*\*Note—unless otherwise stated, describing qualitative methods uses the same format as for quantitative methods—though the actual methods used will be different.**

- I. General differences between quantitative and qualitative methods
- II. Components of Qualitative Methods
  - A. Sample, study population, sampling frame, sampling procedures
    1. What is an appropriate sample size for qualitative research?

2. What are the typical sampling procedures for qualitative research?
3. How representative should the sample be of the study population?

B. Study site—where your research takes place, such as

1. The sponsoring agency (e.g. a child welfare agency; a hospital)
2. The place where you will do your observations (e.g. a classroom; a street corner)
3. The group allowing you access (e.g. homeless encampment; an organized protest; a bridge club)

C. Research design—one of the five approaches

\*\*\*If you were to add a qualitative component to your topic, which approach would you choose?

D. Variables and measurement—What are the themes of interest? Themes come from

1. The literature on the topic, population, and research (for your 240 proposal)
2. The data (for your Results section, next year)
  - a) The data will confirm your preexisting themes, and provide more depth of understanding, and
  - b) The data should provide other unforeseen themes

E. Human subject considerations—ethics and qualitative research. All issues in Informed Consent are important. Additional ethical issues have to do with the role of the researcher and how much the researcher discloses to participants.

F. Procedures and data collection techniques—

1. Types of data collection methods
  - a) Interviews—Structured vs. Unstructured vs. Semi-structured
    - (1) *Structured interview*: interviews that ask each interviewee a series of pre-established questions in a specified order. This is to promote consistency and comparability of questions and responses. The interviewer has a specific protocol, follows a script, and controls the pace of the interview.
    - (2) *Unstructured interview or conversational interview*—interviews which are relatively unsystematic in order and wording. It captures more breadth and depth by allowing the interviewees to dictate more the course of the interview, like having a conversation
    - (3) *Semi-structured interview*: combination of the above two types

- b) Focus group—a guided discussion with a small group of people (usually chosen by purposive sampling)
  - c) Observation—requires little or no involvement of researcher (but see below, the Continuum of Observation vs. Participation)
  - d) Use of existing texts or other media, such as analysis of newspaper articles, policy documents, artwork
2. Role of researcher
- a) What motivates the researcher? Personal experience? Intellectual curiosity? Social action?
  - b) Insider vs. outsider—what’s the researcher’s relationship with the topic and study population?

\*\*\*If you’re a survivor of domestic violence, and our research concerns victims of domestic violence, can you be an “outsider”? What would it take?

- c) The continuum of observation vs. participation
  - Complete observer
  - Observer who also participates
  - Participant who also observes
  - Complete participant

\*\*\*Think about your own topic. Where along this continuum would you be?

- d) Extent of disclosure to participants—what do you tell them about your role?

\*\*\*Discussion—think of situations where you would want to fully disclose your role as researcher. Think of situations where you would not want to disclose your role as researcher. Also, what are the ethical implications of this?

## Mixed Methods

I. Mixed methods—the combination of quantitative and qualitative research, with the premise that the combination provides a better way to answer the research questions than one method alone.

- A. Triangulation—the use of more than one type of data to confirm findings
  - 1. Interviewing participants in a treatment study, to confirm the quantitative outcome measurements (if from their own point of view the treatment helped or didn’t help)
  - 2. Comparing quantitative survey results on economic hardships for families, with the qualitative data from a focus group

B. Qualitative and quantitative methods can have equal weight, or one has more weight than the other

1. *Quantitative data are prioritized:* Immigrant families are surveyed about the extent of engagement with community services. Then, a focus group is conducted to understand the concept of “engagement” from the immigrants’ point of view, to help make sense of the quantitative results
2. *Qualitative data are prioritized:* To develop an instrument on gay fathers’ motives for parenting, researchers conducted in-depth interviews to determine the important dimensions. Later, a quantitative instrument was developed and piloted.

### **Discussion of Study Questions for article: “Women’s voices on recovery...”**

1. Identify the main research questions. **Student report**
2. This is a mixed methods study. What methods are being mixed? **Student report**
3. How is “resilience” use as a theoretical foundation for the study?
4. Although the authors describe the study as “exploratory” there are explanatory aspects of the quantitative analyses. What are the dependent and independent variables for the explanatory research question?
5. Give a specific example how were qualitative findings added something important to the quantitative methods? **Student report**
6. What are the implications of the study for social work practice?
7. What did you find especially convincing about this study?

A few more things to look for:

- The sampling strategy for the qualitative component--*purposive*
- How did the authors address the trustworthiness of the qualitative results?

### **Important concepts and definitions to learn**

- Triangulation
- Structured interview
- Unstructured interview
- Semi-structured interview
- Participant observation
- Focus group
- Mixed methods

### **Next week 11/14:**

- Validity, reliability and verification of qualitative research; Introduction to Program

### Evaluation

- We'll do a review for test on 11/21 (Test will cover material up to and including today.)
- More review of Final Paper requirements
- More Affinity Group work on Final Paper

## **Affinity Groups—Support for Developing Projects**

### Objectives

- Practice presenting your work concisely
  - Obtain feedback from others working in similar areas (assigned by Instructor)
1. Today: everyone presents
    - a. Title of your study
    - b. Problem area addressed
    - c. Why is this study important?
    - d. Briefly summarize what you learned from literature review
    - e. State research questions or hypothesis
  
  2. Next week and 12/5: everyone presents
    - a. Title of study
    - b. Problem area
    - c. Research questions or hypothesis
    - d. Method components under consideration (as far as you know at this point)
      - i. Research design (Type of research (descriptive or explanatory/evaluative?)); Cross-sectional or longitudinal?; If evaluative: Which group design?
      - ii. Study population & sampling strategy
      - iii. Study site
      - iv. Variables to be used—conceptual and operational definitions
      - v. Human subjects considerations
      - vi. Study procedures & data collection strategies
      - vii. Study design limitations